



# Accountability and student success in Washington higher education

WASHINGTON  
**HIGHER  
EDUCATION**  
COORDINATING BOARD

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DRAFT

# Accountability in Higher Education - 2006

## Introduction

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is required by law to establish an accountability monitoring and reporting system. As a part of this mandate, the HECB is directed to review higher education system achievements annually, and to report achievements every two years.

After accountability measures were added to the state budget in 2005, the HECB, in collaboration with the Office of Financial Management, the four-year institutions and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, revised the accountability framework. The revisions were adopted in May 2006 by OFM and the HECB. Performance targets were also adopted by OFM and the HECB.

This report summarizes statewide results achieved in the most recent academic year for which statewide data are available (in most cases, the 2005-06 academic year). Data on results for individual four-year institutions, as well as a variety of background information and contextual data, is presented separately in the full report

To assist the reader in understanding the meaning of results from the most recent year, trend data is provided. Results from two previous periods of time are shown – the annual average for the five years from the 1997-98 academic year through 2001-02, and the annual average for the three years immediately preceding the most recent year. When comparable data from other states is readily available, it is included to enrich the comparative perspective.

Placing students at the center of policy development is a commonly sounded theme. Focusing on students is a challenge when it comes to reporting statewide system results. Yet a foundational purpose of the HECB is to advocate for students. This report takes up the challenge by spotlighting a few of the students whose lives and educational experiences lie behind the numbers and the percentages.

We hope readers will reflect upon the many students whose stories add up to the statistical summaries. Students are the primary reason this work has value and urgency. We applaud state policymakers for creating opportunities for these students and urge the state to ensure opportunities will remain available for students who have yet to knock on the door of higher education.

- Higher Education Coordinating Board, December 2006

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## Transfer Progress Measures



*Patrick Chen transferred from Edmonds Community College to CWU-Lynnwood, where he expects to earn his bachelor's degree in accounting in 2008.*

### *Edmonds CC student making CPA progress by the numbers*

Patrick Chen planned to become an accountant while attending Meadowdale High School in Edmonds. He had a natural affinity for the profession - both his father and grandfather are accountants. On a fast track to accomplish that goal, Patrick is now thinking even bigger.

After graduating from Edmonds Community College with an associate degree in 2006, Patrick enrolled in the accounting program at Central Washington University-Lynnwood. He is set to earn his bachelor's degree and to become a CPA when he graduates in 2008. After this, he intends to continue in CWU-Lynnwood's Master in Public Accountancy program.

Patrick has advanced rapidly toward his degree by taking advantage of programs designed to help hard-working students move ahead at an accelerated pace. As a student at Meadowdale High School in Edmonds, he earned college credit first by taking Tech Prep classes and then by entering the Edmonds Community College Running Start program.

When he graduated from high school in 2004, Patrick already had earned most of the credits he needed to complete his first year of college. This enabled him to start right in on second-year accounting classes, further preparing himself for the transition to CWU.

For his extra effort and outstanding performance, Patrick received scholarships from the Edmonds Community College Foundation and Central Washington University College of Business.

## Transfer Progress Measures

### *Transfer success rate key to state's total degree production*

Washington's higher education system relies heavily on a 'two-plus-two' model, providing broad access to low-cost, high-quality post-secondary education.

- *More than 70 percent of the students enrolled in state higher education attend one of the state's 34 community colleges, which serve widely distributed population centers.*
- *Washington is ranked fifth nationally in terms of the percentage of its population enrolled in community colleges.*
- *Transfer students account for about 40 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded annually in Washington.*

One of the quickest and most economical ways to increase the number of students who earn bachelor's degrees in Washington

is to increase the number of students who transfer successfully.

### *Progress measures*

#### **Ready for transfer**

The chart below shows the number of students who have at least a 2.0 GPA after completing at least 45 credits in core courses. These students are considered 'ready to transfer.'

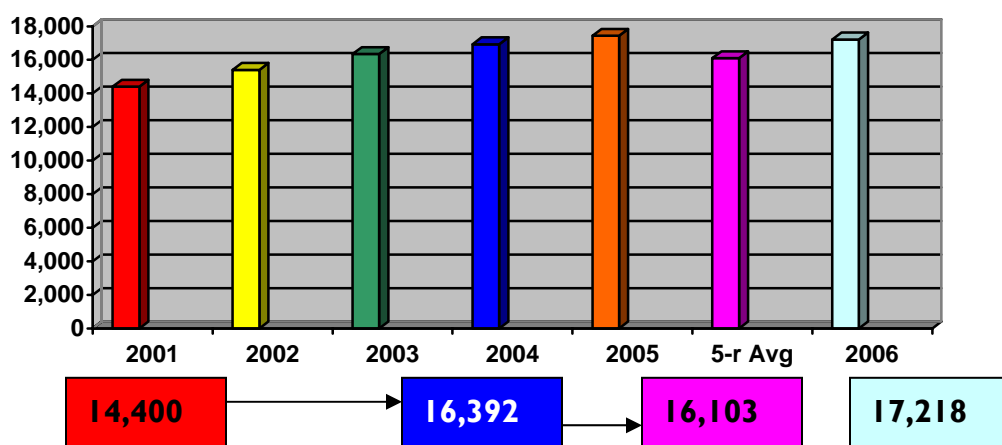
#### **Students who transfer**

The chart on Page 4 shows the percentage of students who earn at least 15 credits and transfer to four-year institutions within three years. The HECB is in the early stages of gathering data to measure this over time and to determine how the transfer success rate can be increased.

#### **Graduation outcomes**

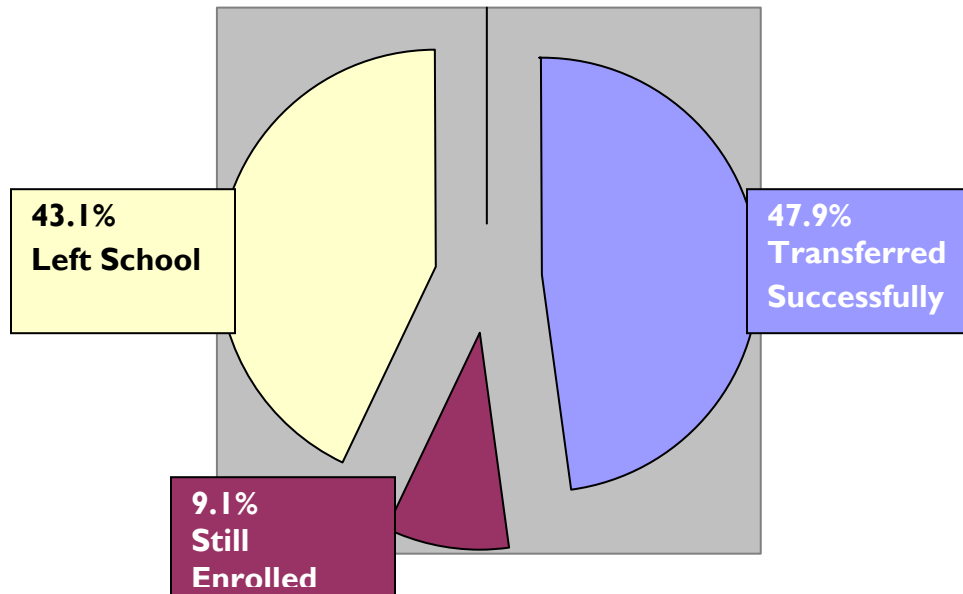
The chart at bottom of Page 4 shows three-year graduation outcomes for the students with associate's degrees who transfer to public four-year institutions.

### **Ready For Transfer**



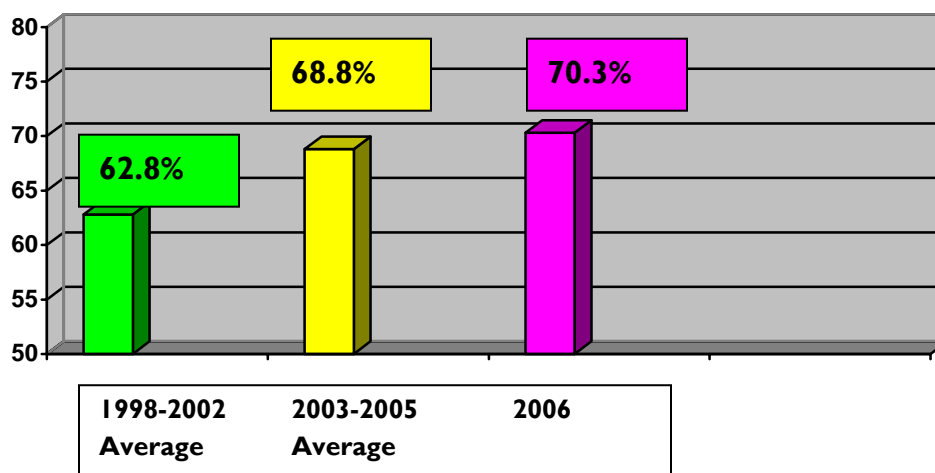
## Transfer Progress Measures

**Students transferring from state's  
community colleges within 3 years**



**Transfer Cohort Enrolling 2001-2002. Data Source: SBCTC  
(Excludes students with fewer than 15 credits)**

**Percentage of students who transfer with associate  
Degree and earn bachelor degree within 3 years**





## Transfer Progress Measures

### *Running Start student earns both diploma and associate degree*

“I loved Running Start,” says Alex Gardner, 18, who graduated in June from both Lower Columbia College and Toutle Lake High School.

“I wanted a challenge, and don’t know what I would have done if it hadn’t been an option. Running Start helped me become more independent. I’m much better prepared to attend a 4-year college now.”

LCC supplied plenty of challenge, not only in the rigor of the courses, but also in the higher expectations and workload of college, she said.

After working last summer doing dispatch in the Communication Office for the Cascade



*Alex Gardner*

Region of the Department of Natural Resources at Castle Rock, she’s a student at Central Washington University, where she plans to major in Information Technology and Business Administration.

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### **OCC graduate studying pre-optometry at UW**

Michael Neilson, Jr., a 2006 Olympic College graduate, became inspired to study pre-optometry at the University of Washington following a trip to his eye doctor while working a construction job.

“I was hauling lumber during one of our 90- degree plus summer days, and decided it wasn’t something I wanted to do for a long time,” Neilson said. “It was obvious my optometrist was really enjoying his work and liked helping people – something I wanted to do.”

While at Olympic College, working part-time to support his wife and child, he was named to the Deans’ List eight times. Having taken the natural sciences courses and other prerequisites needed for pre-optometry at UW, Neilson graduated in June 2006 and was admitted to the UW for the fall quarter.

He says he is looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead, but he will miss Olympic College a great deal.



*Michael Neilson, Jr.*

## Degrees Awarded



*Washington State University students attend graduation ceremony in Pullman*

## Degree completion a vital component of success

The 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education calls for increasing the number of bachelor's degrees awarded annually in the state to 30,000 by 2010. The master plan and the state's accountability system focus on degrees awarded because completion is a vital component of the success for both the student and the educational institution.

Each year, Washington colleges and universities produce about 21 bachelor's degrees for every 1,000 residents between the ages of 20 and 34. This relatively low per-capita degree production can be attributed to a low participation rate in

higher education among this population. Many students choose a career or technical path through the state's well-developed community college system rather than complete a bachelor's degree.

However, Washington's colleges and universities excel in the number of degrees awarded compared to students enrolled. Washington leads the Global Challenge States (eight states scoring highest on the New Economy Index), far surpasses the U.S. average, and outperforms countries in Europe and Asia (OECD countries) in degree production per students enrolled.

## Degrees Awarded – Bachelor's

### *WSU Honors College student wins junior writing award*

When Hai Tran began his coursework at Washington State University in fall, 2003, no one was fully prepared for the impact he would have on campus.

Born and raised in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Hai gained admittance to WSU by earning a General Equivalency Degree in 2003. Based on a stellar record during his freshman year, he gained entrance to the Honors College.

In the space of only seven semesters, Hai has completed two degrees (Finance and Accounting) and has also earned a minor in Writing.

A winner of the Harold and Jeanne Rounds Olsen Writing Award in 2005, Hai was recognized for submitting one of the five best junior writing portfolios on the entire campus – no small accomplishment for a student whose native language is not English.

He was immediately hired to work at the WSU Writing Center to assist other students with their classroom writing assignments.

Graduating magna cum laude, Hai has also served as president of the International Students' Council. In this capacity he has



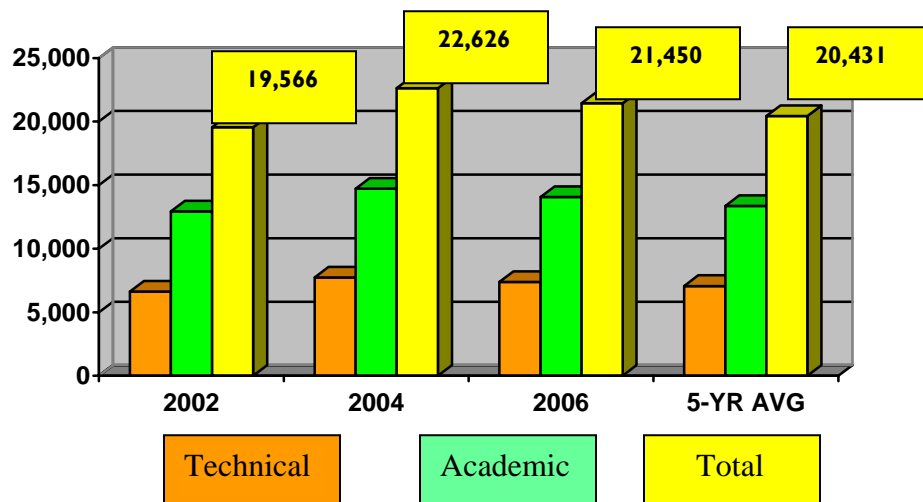
*WSU Honors student Hai Tran surprised the WSU campus by winning the university's most prestigious writing award – although English is not his native language*

represented more than 800 international students on campus, planned and organized International Education Week, and met weekly with officers and representatives from 12 international student groups.

He plans to return to Vietnam in December to complete an internship with Ernst and Young Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City and visit his family, but he will come back to the United States next fall for a permanent position with Ernst and Young.



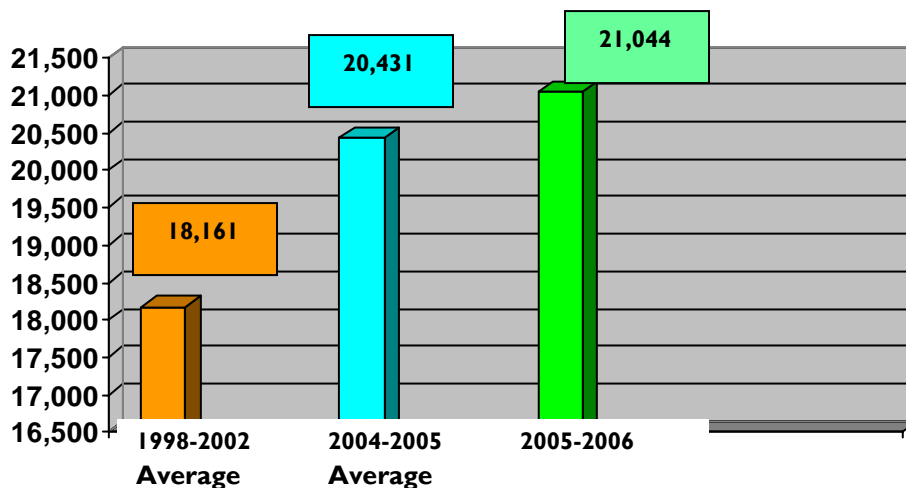
## Degrees Awarded - Associate



### Associate degree production among highest in U.S.

Washington community and technical colleges annually award 18 associate degrees per 1,000 residents aged 20 to 34. This rate of degree production is very high compared to other states. A very productive two-year college sector is consistent with the comparatively high participation rates within the public two-year sector.

## Bachelor's Degrees Granted 1998-2006



### Washington excels in bachelor's degree production

Washington's community and technical colleges enroll more than 70 percent of those seeking post-secondary education each year. This system offers access and is successful at producing associate and technical degrees. However, Washington ranks 45<sup>th</sup> nationwide in participation rates in bachelor's degree programs. Washington's four-year institutions are highly productive in terms of degrees conferred per 1,000 enrolled students – exceeding the average of U.S. Global Challenge States and many OECD countries, and far surpassing the national average.

## Degrees Awarded – High Demand



*Jeremy Zanzig (foreground) and Andrei Rekhtin*

### *On the fast track to an engineering career*

Andrei Rekhtin and Jeremy Zanzig recently landed jobs at Analytical Methods, Inc. a Redmond engineering firm, after graduating from the University of Washington College of Engineering. The two began their studies at Everett Community College.

Rekhtin began his college studies in 1999 while a student at Mariner High School. Zanzig entered Running Start from Everett High School at the same time. Both spent three years at EvCC, with their final year focused on engineering prerequisites.

“When we transferred to the University of Washington, every class counted,” says Zanzig. “Our prerequisites were reviewed and we were on top of it... this put us one year ahead of other juniors in the engineering program.”

Says Rekhtin, “Our EvCC engineering instructor Dave Utela didn’t just have the knowledge. He knew how to teach. This was true of our calculus teacher Susan Cross, too.”

“That’s the nice thing about the small classes at EvCC,” says Zanzig. “Our instructors really got to know us, and were interested in what we learned.”

## Degrees Awarded – High Demand

### High-demand bachelor's degrees a top priority

The 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education emphasizes the importance of an education system that responds to the needs of the state's economy. Since 1999, the HECB has administered competitive high-demand enrollment grants to respond to two related challenges.

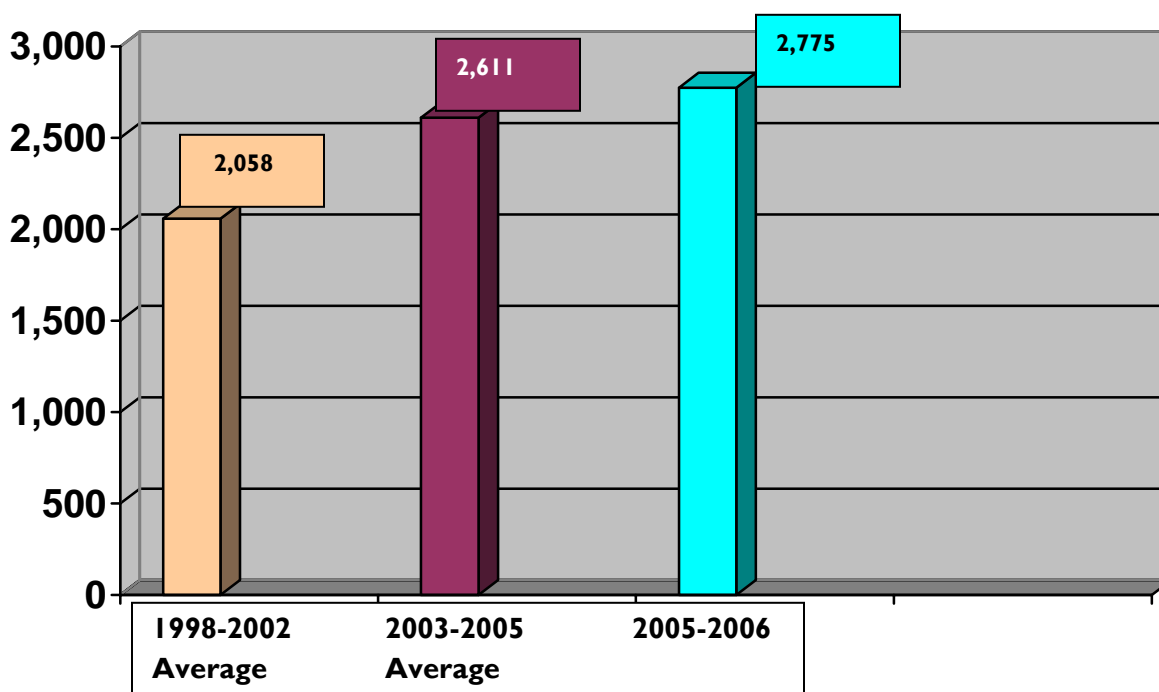
- In many cases, college students are unable to take advantage of educational and career opportunities because enrollment access is limited in certain fields or programs.
- Many employers report difficulty in hiring enough qualified graduates from Washington state colleges and universities to fill high-skill openings.

The high-demand enrollment program responds to both needs by creating new enrollment opportunities for students in fields where they are most likely to find jobs upon graduation.

The performance measure for the number of bachelor's degrees in high-demand fields is included to address this priority. The master plan also set a goal of conferring 11,500 advanced degrees per year by 2010.

The HECB's Statewide and Regional Needs Assessment calls for increasing the number of bachelor's degrees in high-demand fields. Many high-demand programs carry high costs in faculty salaries, equipment and facilities.

**High-Demand Degree Production 1998-2006**



## Degrees Awarded – Advanced

### *UW sociology graduate student earns top academic honors*

Heather Evans, a 2003 graduate of Shoreline Community College (SCC), received the President's Medal from University of Washington President Mark Emmert at the University's 131st commencement ceremony in June 2006.

This award is given to one university transfer student each year who demonstrates academic excellence while at the UW.

Evans, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, expects to earn her Ph.D. in three years. She entered as a student who had taken a break from education after high school and who wasn't sure she would 'fit in' at a large university as an older student.

Evans comments, "My experience at Shoreline Community College was extremely positive. I was very supported by my professors and those who advised me.

"At the time I was looking to major in anthropology and wanted to work with professors such as Sonja Solland and Lew Tarrant. I became very interested in history at the same time."

She also became involved as a student, serving as a member of a faculty tenure committee.



*Heather Evans*

"Heather was especially interested in how interpretations of history vary over time," says Terry Taylor, history professor at SCC.

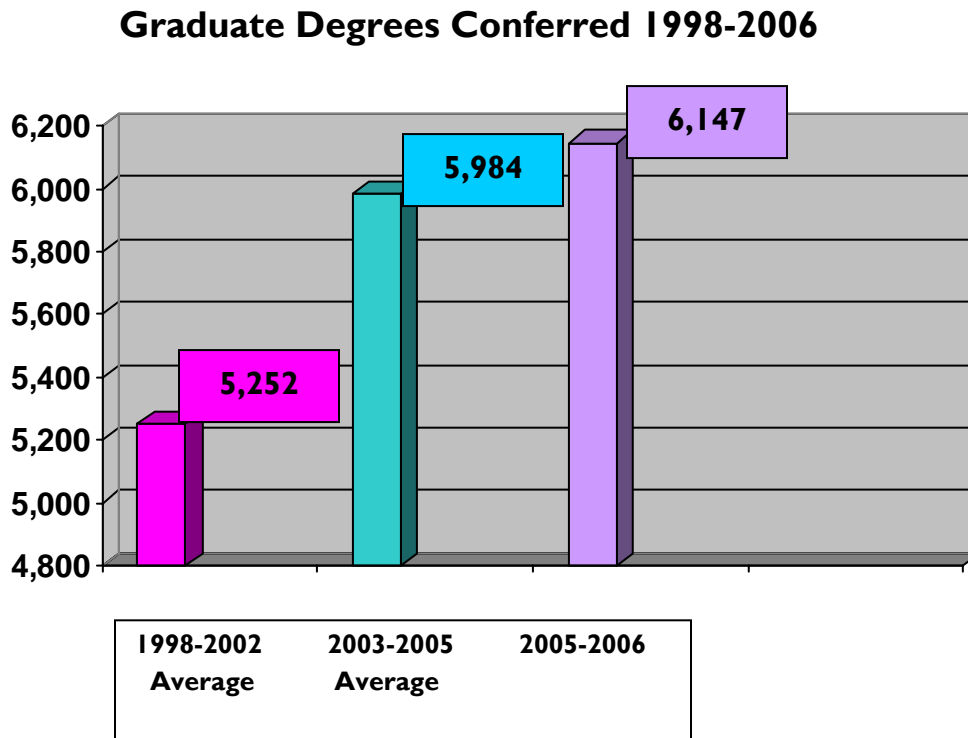
"She was the kind of student who always wanted to know more and understand where present day concepts originated in the past."

While at the University of Washington, Evans received a number of scholarships, including the Goddard and the Leona Hickman scholarships.

When asked about her future plans, Evans admits she is very focused on her educational endeavors because she enjoys learning. She will complete her Ph.D. in the next few years and will make decisions about her next step after that.



## Degrees Awarded – Advanced



### Graduate, professional degrees reflect low participation rates

Washington institutions award 7.9 advanced degrees annually per 1,000 residents aged 20 to 34 years old. This output is lower than all of the seven other states that make up the top eight Global Challenge States. Washington's very low participation rate (47<sup>th</sup> in the nation for public graduate and professional students) must be taken into account when interpreting these data. Private institutions award 44 percent of the advanced degrees in Washington.

Public institutions awarded 6,097 advanced degrees in 2004-2005, an increase of 23 percent since the 1997-98 academic year. In spite of this progress, graduate and professional degree production would still have to increase 64 percent to reach the average for all Global Challenge States.

## Basic Skills, Workforce Preparation

With 34 institutions, the state's community and technical college system plays an important role in providing access to students who seek post-secondary education.

Community and technical colleges also provide numerous **Basic Skills** and **Ready For Work** programs that respond to community and regional economic, social and cultural needs.

### *Immigrant's basic skill courses lead to workforce training*

Valeriy Kulik was determined to learn English quickly after emigrating from the Ukraine with his wife and child in 2003.

He enrolled in Everett Community College's English as a Second Language (ESL) program, after being referred through the campus-based Refugee and Immigrant Forum.

After Kulik completed the first three ESL levels, he entered Customized Job Skills Training, a program funded by the Department of Social and Health Services and managed by the refugee forum and the college.

The program is designed to teach high-demand job skills to limited English-speaking adults. College instructors teach job-specific vocabulary, which Kulik now uses as a full-time welder for ABW Technologies in Arlington.

Community colleges work to help students overcome language, economic and societal barriers on their way to becoming successful citizens.

Basic skills and workforce training enable community colleges to address local and regional needs and continually assess what kinds of new programs and strategies are needed.



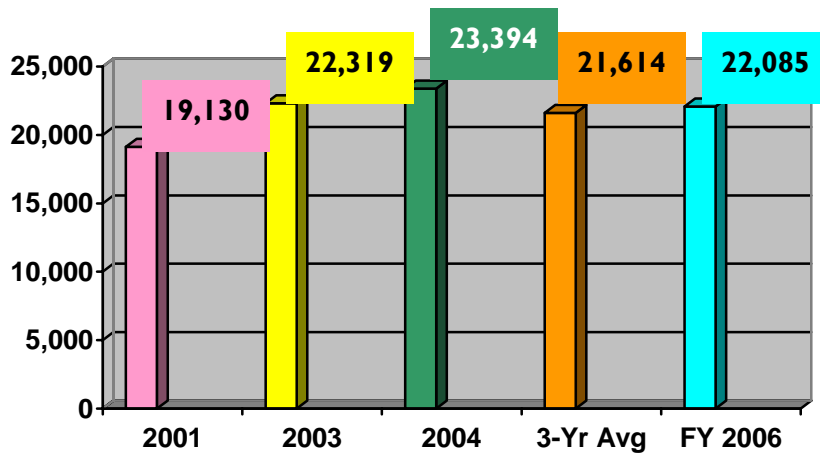
*Valeriy Kulik*

An agreement between ABW, the state's WorkFirst and WorkSource programs, and the Refugee and Immigrant Forum made it possible for Kulik to apply for a permanent position when he completed his skills training program.

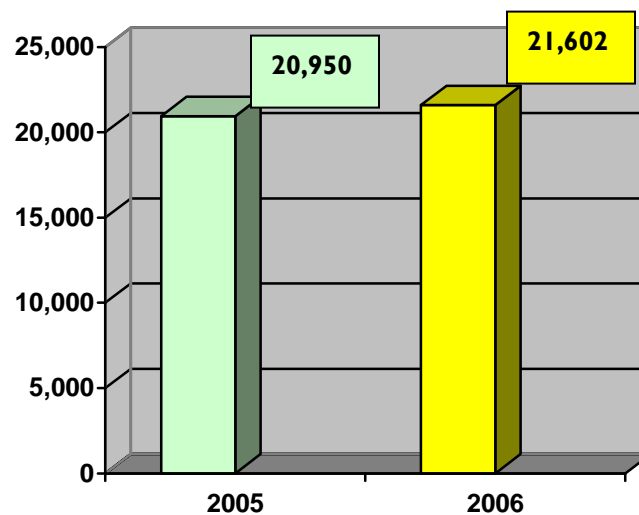
## Basic Skills, Workforce Preparation

### Ready for Work

The SBCTC performance measure related to workforce preparation is defined as the number of students who complete a professional or technical certificate or degree and who achieve industry skill standards. Results are shown in the figure below.



### Basic Skills Competency



Students enrolling in an Adult Basic Education or English as a Second Language program take a pre-program and post-program standardized test in areas such as reading, writing,

mathematics and English language proficiency. Students who gain at least one competency level in at least one subject after completing the program are included in this measure.

## Keeping Students on Track

### *Financial aid, fortitude and flair set stage for success*

Rachae Thomas expects to earn a bachelor's degree in theater from Western Washington University in June, 2007.

A first-generation college student, Rachae entered Western not knowing quite what to expect. She often felt the pressure of "needing to speak for every other person of color."

But Western's Ethnic Student Center gave her a "home, a safe place to go" as she overcame initial obstacles and moved ahead with her studies.

She credits the individual attention she received from professors for keeping her on track to graduate on time. She also credits support from her mother, a single parent raising three other children.

"At Western, I have felt listened to and respected. I needed to find my own voice as an artist, and my professors have helped me do that," Thomas says.

She enrolled in Western's music program, then changed her major to theater arts. "Theater isn't as natural to me as singing is," she says. "It's



*Rachae Thomas expects to earn her bachelor's in theater from WWU in June, 2007.*

something I have to really work at, but it has become a passion."

Her hard work paid off. She was chosen to play the lead in Western's 2006 performance of *Evita*.

Thomas says financial aid helped make her education possible. Her three siblings, ages 14, 12 and 8 already plan to follow in her footsteps.

"By my example, they have seen that college is not something you're supposed to think about after high

***Measuring Up 2006***, produced by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, states Washington "has consistently been a very high performer over the past seven years" on six-year graduation rates."



## Keeping Students on Track

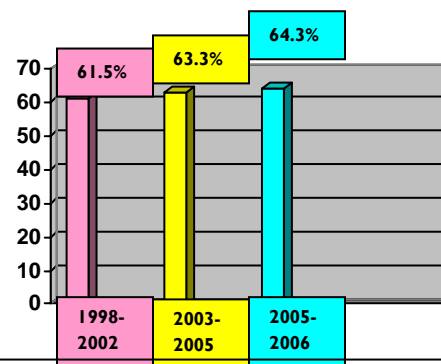
### Six-year graduation rates

One measure of efficiency in higher education is how long it takes students to earn their degrees.

Washington's Council of Presidents has reported it takes students an average of 3.2 to 4.8 years to earn a bachelor's degree.

The six-year graduation rate at Washington's public universities is among the highest in the nation.

The six-year graduation rate is a national norm, not an optimal outcome. It is not meant to suggest that students



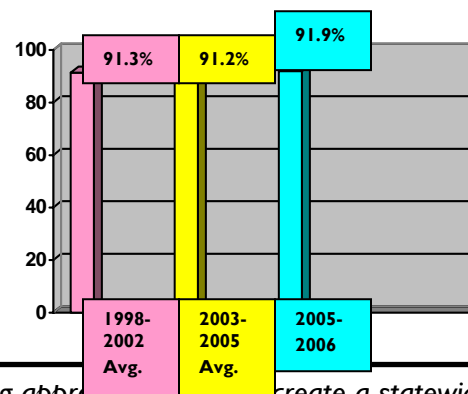
### Graduation rates for students with fewer 'extra credits'

Another way to measure efficiency is to track the percentage of 'extra' credits students complete while earning a degree.

A reasonable standard of efficiency is achieved if students exceed the total credits needed for their degree by no more than 25 percent.

This flexibility allows students to explore major fields, change majors or add a minor to complement their major course of study.

should take six years to graduate. The chart above shows Washington's six-year graduation percentages.



The Higher Education Coordinating Board is seeking approval in 2007 to create a statewide online student advising system to help students plan their degree programs and track their progress efficiently. The system would provide a Web portal containing course equivalency information for all degree programs in the state, both public and private. Instant access to information on degree options and course equivalencies among all institutions is the goal.

earning a single undergraduate degree within a single major.

## Keeping Students on Track



*Brandon Kennedy is a 'natural' at Central Washington University.*

### *CWU sophomore likes small classes, personal attention*

An outstanding football player – a 'natural' – Brandon Kennedy had his choice of colleges after graduating from Gonzaga Prep High School in Spokane. But Brandon decided to stay close to home.

"I had offers to go other places, but I chose here," says Brandon, a sophomore at Central Washington University. "It's the atmosphere, the people – and the guys on the team are really good guys."

Brandon said his decision to attend CWU was sealed when he discovered he could live on campus, attend small classes and take advantage of the university's academic support services, such as the math and writing centers.

"It's nice. If I'm late, I can still roll out of bed and walk to class," he says.

Brandon's choice appears to have been a good one. Not only did he complete his freshman year classes and advance to sophomore status, he also was picked as a 2006 pre-season All-American defensive back.

"I saw myself going to college with 300 people in a class. But here the classes

are small and I know all my professors well. You might not always get that chance competing with 300 students."

It's too early to tell if a pro career is possible for Brandon, but if it isn't, he has another strategy on tap: a communications degree and a career in sports broadcasting.

"I like talking about sports and I like being on camera." It's another field that might come naturally to Brandon Kennedy.

### **Keeping Students on Track**

## **Washington helping freshmen stay the course**

During the last two decades, higher education institutions have placed increased emphasis on helping students navigate the sometimes confusing and tortuous path of their first year in college.

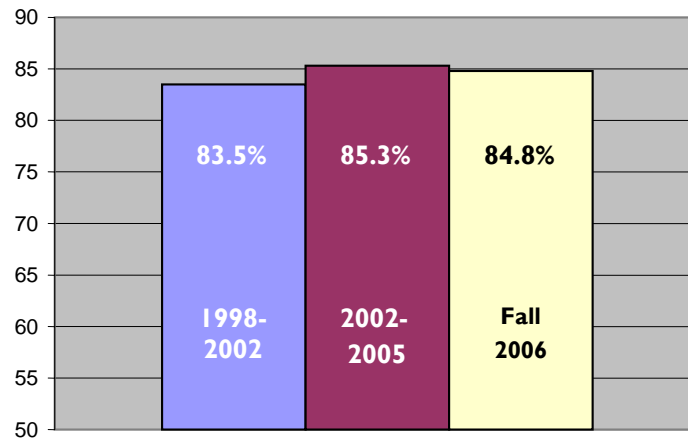
Full professors now teach many freshman-level courses, greatly enriching the initial college experience for thousands of new students. Special study centers, freshman study groups, and innovative living arrangements involve students in new ways and support their success.

Even so, many students complete the first year and never return. If students simply persist long enough to enroll for the sophomore year it will significantly increase their chances of degree completion. Consequently, they are continually seeking to improve freshman retention programs and strategies.

Public four-year institutions in Washington report freshman retention rates that compare very favorably with other states.

According to *Measuring Up 2006*, "Washington has consistently been a top-performing state in the percentage of freshmen at four-year colleges and universities returning for their sophomore year." *Measuring Up* (which includes both public and private institutional data) reports the top five states achieve an average freshman retention rate of 82%. In 2006, the rate for Washington was 82%, which is up from 80% in 1992.

### Freshman Retention At Public Four-Year Institutions



### Keeping Students on Track



*“The evening and weekend studies program allowed me to keep my day job.”*

*Aldo Del Bosque is pursuing a teaching degree at The Evergreen State College.*

*Evergreen student making transition to teaching career*

Aldo Del Bosque was born in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico in 1970. He came to Washington in his late teens, became a U.S. citizen, and worked at a Christmas tree farm in Shelton for several years,



followed by a long stint as the manager of a Mexican restaurant.

“It was while I was managing the restaurant that I started to see the importance of education in my life and the lives of my young daughters,” he recalls. “It was then that I decided to make a career switch, and became a teacher’s aide.”

A year after becoming a teacher’s aide, Del Bosque enrolled at The Evergreen State College.

“I was attracted to Evergreen by

the liberal arts curriculum,” he says. “The Evening and Weekend Studies program allowed me to keep my day job.”

Del Bosque is pursuing his bachelor’s degree with an emphasis in education. He has worked with fourth and fifth graders at Evergreen Elementary, a bilingual school in Shelton, where he has taught lessons in environmental studies.

“Aldo’s so conscientious. He has a fine rapport with the children, and they really look forward to his coming to our class,” says Judi Pegg, who teaches fourth and fifth grades at Evergreen Elementary.

In addition to his education studies, Del Bosque still intends to pursue his interest in visual arts. “You have to look into what you like to do, but also be realistic about job opportunities,” explains Del Bosque, a third-year student.



